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1892

VERSES

BY

LOUISA J. HALL





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LOUISA J. ^{Jane Park} HALL



CAMBRIDGE

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I OFFER these Verses to my friends quite conscious that there is not a spark of genius in them ; but as a genuine expression of my deepest feelings, they may interest those whose kindness has made my long life so happy.

LOUISA J. HALL.

CAMBRIDGE, *April*, 1892.



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THE BABY'S COMPLAINT.¹



Q H mother, dear mother, no wonder I cry ;
More wonder by far that your baby don't die !
No matter what ails me, no matter who's here,
No matter how hungry the "poor little dear !"
No matter if full, or all out of breath,
She trots me, and trots me, and trots me to death !

I love my dear nurse, but I dread that great knee ;
I like all her talk, but woe unto me !
She can't be contented with talking so pretty,
And washing and dressing, and doing her duty ;

¹ Calling on a lady of the parish, I found her baby of two weeks old wailing in the nurse's lap while she trotted it vigorously. It became quiet as soon as I took it in my arms, but when on leaving I gave it back, the trotting began again, and the pitiful crying also. These verses were written as soon as I reached home, were printed in a Providence paper and copied very widely, even as far as New Orleans, at the time.

All that's very well, I can bear soap and water ;
But, mother, she is an unmerciful trotter !

Pretty ladies, I want just to look at your faces ;
Pretty lamp, pretty fire, let me see how it blazes ;
How can I, my head going bibbity bob ?
And she trots me harder, the harder I sob.
Oh mother, do stop her ; I 'm inwardly sore ;
I hiccup and cry, and she trots me the more,
And talks about ' wind,' when 't is she makes me ache ;
Wish 't would blow her away for poor baby's sake !

Thank goodness, I 'm still ; oh, blessed be quiet !
I 'm glad my dear mother is willing to try it ;
Of foolish old customs my mother's no lover,
And the wisdom of this she can never discover.
I 'll rest me awhile, and just look about,
And laugh up at Sally, who peeps in and out,
And pick up some notions as soon as I can,
To fill my small noddle before I 'm a man.

Oh dear, is that she? is she coming so soon?
She's bringing my dinner with teacup and spoon;
She'll hold me with one hand, in t' other the cup,
And as fast as it's down, she'll just shake it up;
And thumpity thump, with the greatest delight,
Her heel it is going from morning till night;
All over the house you may hear it, I'm sure,
Trot—trotting! just think what I'm doomed to endure!

MY DAUGHTER.

AGED SIXTEEN.



HE is not mine! I know, and yet
Why will the foolish heart forget?
She is not mine, — I may not claim
More than a mother's transient name.

Her life, her soul, her power of thought,
Not all earth's treasures could have bought,
God freely lent, and for a while
Gladdens my pathway with her smile.

Shall she be mine beyond the grave?
Oh, we believe what most we crave.
But idle heart, do not forget
She is not thine, — not yet, not yet.

If I would have a holy claim
That shall outlive Life's quiv'ring flame,
I must not dare to call her mine,
But lead to God, to him resign.

THE MESSENGER.



ONCE suddenly to me there came
The Thing that men with terror name;
And as I lay with shortening breath,
I saw and knew the face of Death.

Oh! solemn sweet the smile he wore,
As if a gleam from Heaven it bore;
And to me tenderly there stole
The message kind, "Göd calls thy soul."

Then stirred my soul to quit this clay,
But lo, not yet! My Lord said, "Stay,"
And from my couch receding slow
I saw, half grieved, the Angel go.

But as life's clouds between us drew,
That radiant smile still glimmered through,
And touched the earth with mystic light,
And turned my doubting faith to sight.

Then thronged the shining forms of sin
Seeking mine earthbound soul to win;
But farther off with waiting feet
Stood the Death Angel, calm and sweet.

Oh, Soul! yield not! thy Father's strength
Shall bid the tempters flee at length,
And God's own messenger of Peace
Shall smiling bring thee glad release.

PROVIDENCE, R.I., *January*, 1871.

ON ARRIVING AT WORCESTER IN MAY.



HIS is the month of all the year
Most fair and sweet — to me most dear.

What makes it so ?

Full well I know.

'T is not that Spring with bud and song
Beckons the dancing June along ;

'T is not that seeking short reprieve,

My cares I toss away, and leave

Down in the city's dusty street,

Which late I trod with burning feet.

There is a spell,

I know it well,

That makes this month of all the year

To me most welcome, sweet, and dear.

ON ARRIVING AT WORCESTER IN MAY. 17

Then much loved auburn locks do bow,
And gently greet my silvered brow ;
Two strong kind hands, two honest eyes,
Bid other days before me rise,
And with a welcome true and sweet,
My feeble steps they haste to greet,
And so, though silent, let me know
Love makes two homes for me below.

1875.

MORNING GLORIES.



WITH tiny hands, at six years old,
I dabbled in the garden mould;
I sowed with glee my small brown seeds,
I watered well, I plucked the weeds.
At last, at last — how long it seemed! —
One morn as early sunshine beamed
I stood and gazed in mute delight;
Three morning glories blessed my sight.

My soul has sowed full many seeds, —
I know not whether flowers or weeds;
But there will come a solemn day,
And in my heart I can but pray
That in its dawn, no longer blind,
My morning glories I may find.

COLUMBINES.



AMONG the rocks the columbines
Nodded at me with friendly signs,
And buttercups and violets
Smiled in my face like loving pets,
For then I was a child.

Among the rocks the columbines
Still nod at me with friendly signs,
And 'mid the grass I love to peer,
And find my darlings just as dear
As when I was a child.

A foolish child! each growing thing
A loving message seemed to bring;
And yet, e'en now, soft whispering still,
With joy this wiser heart they fill,
For still I am a child.

HEART'S-EASE.



MY heart's-ease, child, upon my breast,
When comes my silent hour of rest ;
My flower it is these many years,
In spite of early griefs and fears.

Who gave it me ? It grew, it grew,
All watered by the sweetest dew, —
First, human love, beyond all telling ;
Then, “ Love divine, all love excelling.”

HEART'S-EASE.

TO MARIE.



DO not send the royal rose,
Nor yet the lily, tall and fair ;
A lowly flower beside them grows,
With sweetest name that flower can bear :
A modest flower, without a thorn ;
A child of sunny, dewy morn ;
And so I deem it emblem true,
And send it smiling, dear, to you.

TO HARRIET ;

WITH A NEW DRESS.



Y zeal to clothe you never flags ;
Since “righteousness is filthy rags,”
Why, wear it still, but none the less
Put over it this poplin dress ;
'T will not wear long with best endeavor,
But those said rags will last forever.

THE HOUSE THAT ALFRED BUILT.

TO A YOUNG ARCHITECT AT CHRISTMAS.



HERE is the house that Alfred built ?
The masons and carpenters all are kilt ;
The folks who lived there are all dead too ;
For Alfred, he made a mighty to-do,
And talked of the beautiful friezes of old, —
Not a frieze did they get except with cold ;
The garret was dark and the cellar was damp,
The rats and the mice they got the cramp,
The chimneys let in the snow and rain,
The smoke, it tried to get up in vain,
The pump was dry and the kitchen was wet,
And the oven, alas! could never be "het,"
The plastering cracked and the floors did creak,
And like a sieve the ceilings did leak ;

For this wonderful Alf had forgotten the spout,
So the roof fell in and the walls fell out,
And the masons and carpenters all were kilt,
And the time was lost and the money spilt,
And this was the house that Alfred built.

TO —.



HAT doth Time take? what takes he not?
He takes the bloom and leaves the grace,
Takes smart from sorrows half forgot,
And leaves youth's sweetness in the face.
He wins the tutored soul to peace,
Kind lessons shedding from his wings;
And though his takings never cease,
Some purest joys he also brings.

So, gentle lady, on thy state
True Love and Honor ever wait;
Time's frowns these maids will not obey,
But serve till Time himself decay.

TO —.

WHEN YOUR SHIP COMES IN.



HALL I wish that your ship may come in ?

Shall I say what I wish you may win

When your ship comes in ?

Tropical fruits, wines that are old,

Spices and silks, jewels and gold, —

All to be yours — when your ship comes in ?

I shall wish that her cargo may be

Rich with such things as the eye cannot see, —

A wisdom most true, and honor most bright ;

A soul that in gentleness findeth its might ;

The friendship of man, from woman yet more, —

Of treasures like these a glorious store,

All to be yours when your ship comes in.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.



REATHE gently, winter wind !

Fall softly, Christmas snows !

In silence, far away,

The Star of Bethlehem rose.

In other skies it shone,

Where frost-kings never frown ;

But on its peaceful beams

God's blessing glided down.

More pure than snows or dews

The babe on whom it smiled ;

And so we keep the hour

Here in our winter wild.

It glittered in the East ;

We, in the distant West,

Dream that we too have seen,

And by that star are blest.

Are there angels in the air ?
Shining wings I do not see ;
Anthems no sweet seraph sings ;
And I lonely bend the knee.
But the song is in my heart,
For I know the Christ is born,
Bringing balm for every smart,
Bringing joy to souls forlorn.

Can I go, a pilgrim meek,
Over sea and over sands,
Still the gentle babe to seek
In the shining Eastern lands ?
O my heart, if sin depart,
Weary feet need never roam ;
Christ himself in each pure heart
Gently seeks and begs a home.

BLESSEDNESS.



T is not happiness I seek, —
Its name I hardly dare to speak ;
It is not made for man on earth,
And heaven alone can give it birth.

There is a something sweet and pure, —
Through life, through death it may endure ;
With steady foot I onward press,
And long to win that Blessedness.

It hath no shadow, this soft light,
But makes each daily duty bright ;
It bids each heart-born tumult cease,
And sobers joy to quiet peace.

An all-abiding sense of Love,
In silence falling from above ;
A conscience clear from wilful sin,
That hath no subterfuge within ;

Fixed duty claiming every power,
And human love to charm each hour, —
These, these, my soul, make Blessedness ;
I ask no more, I seek no less.

And yet I know these are too much,
My very being's life they touch ;
Without them all, oh ! let me still
Find Blessedness in God's dear will.

GROW NOT OLD.



EVER, my heart, wilt thou grow old !
My hair is white, my blood runs cold,
And one by one my powers depart,
But youth sits smiling in my heart.

Down hill the path of age ? O no !
Up, up with patient steps I go ;
I watch the skies fast brightening there ;
I breathe a sweeter, purer air.

Beside my path small tasks spring up,
Though but to hand the cooling cup,
Speak the true word of hearty cheer,
Tell the lone soul that God is near.

Beat on, my heart, and grow not old ;
And when thy pulses all are told,
Let me, though working, loving still,
Kneel as I meet my Maker's will.

SERVICE IN THE HEREAFTER.



WOULD my work were better done !

I would it were but just begun ;

For listening where I waiting stand,

Comes music from the Better Land.

Oh, busy hand, and heart, and brain,

Why have ye toiled so long in vain ?

I feel that unknown world so near,

And yet my spirit knows no fear.

For longer life I will not pray ;

I will not ask another day,

For Thou, dear Father, even yet

New chance may give, — new tasks may set.


Beyond the grave, to Thee more true,

Oh, give me still Thy work to do !

The power to serve Thou 'lt surely spare ;

Shall not Thy service wait me there ?

A WISH.

Y soul! pass quietly away
Ere morning breezes wake the day.
When kindly sleep hath closed dear eyes,
And midnight hovers through the skies,
With silent pang and placid sigh,—
So, loving Father, let me die.

When shining morn shall tell the tale,
There shall arise no cry or wail;
One startled gaze, faint hopes, sharp fears,
And then the gently dropping tears,
And reverent touch on brow and hair,
To find no trace of suffering there.

Love shall not waste its strength and life
To watch the lingering mortal strife,
With weary steps around my bed,
Till patience droops and hope has fled ;
But when the midnight world is dumb
My Lord beloved shall whisper, " Come " !

June, 1884.

A PRAYER.



H Father ! shall these prayers e'er win
Some power to rule the world within ?
Thy blooming earth, thy starlit skies
Forever bless these gazing eyes ;
While human love still guards my way
With tender watching day by day.
Dear Lord ! such beauty fills the earth,
I walk amid such peace and worth,
And look around with such glad heart,
I can but think how good Thou art.
So fair abroad ! but how within ?
Ungoverned thought may yet be sin :
Mine idle fears I cannot chase ;
And doubts that well I know are base
Still clog the soul that fain would rise,
Denounce my outward life as " lies ; "

And when sweet human love I win,
With shame I dare not look within.
Oh ! reckoned better than I am,
My heart cries out against the sham.
Thou humbled soul ! thy task is set ;
With ceaseless prayer thy want be met.
God's grace alone can help aright
That inward world, where deadly fight
Goes on unseen by mortal eyes,
And human strength all baffled lies.

Help me, dear Father ! just to be
All that my dear ones think of me.

WHAT MEANS IT?



HE pen but mocks the guiding hand,
The feet seem placed on sliding sand,
The very words I strain to hear
Are but a murmur in mine ear,
And Mem'ry plays most faithless tricks
When names well known I strive to fix.
What means it all? I will not wage
Rebellious war with gentle Age!
The mere machine may wear away, —
Its functions cease in slow decay;
But, oh, my soul, untouched and free,
So thou may'st loved and loving be,
Full, full of love to God and man,
Why should I dread the common ban?

Dear faces smile away my pains,
And Age lets light through broken panes.
So wait, my cheerful soul ! ere long
The flesh shall fail, and thou be strong.

January, 1886.

“THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD.”



FOR work, dear God, I plead, —
For work where Thou shalt lead.
I wait Thy wise commands ;
Thy work needs human hands,
And mine, though feeble grown,
Would toil for Thee alone.

Too late I breathe the prayer :
No burden can they bear ;
I weep in helplessness ;
My strength is less and less,
With trembling hands and feet,
What work for me is meet ?

A thrilling whisper came,
My murmurs ceased in shame.

"*THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD.*" 41

" Outside thy work is done,
Within, 't is but begun ;
All white thy soul must be,
Or never look on Me " !

March 14, 1889.

OLD AGE MURMURS ITS SONG.



STRANGE fresh wind blows in my face,

Not born, I know, in time or space ;

A wondrous sunshine fills my heart,

And 'lights my path ; I may depart.

I gently fold the weary hands ;

Tired feet shall seek no grassy lands.

I hear no harps, I see no crown,

No smiling angels gazing down.

But something comes, I know not what,

It standeth still, it speaketh not,

But o'er my soul breathes holy peace :

My loving Father sends — Release !

In sickness.

MY BODY TO MY SOUL.



Y Soul! unclad, — before my birth
Didst thou desire to dwell on earth?
Summoned perhaps from farthest space,
Fettered in flesh to join this race!
Entangled thus for weal or woe,
The how or when we cannot know.
Oh, Soul! thou hast not been my slave,
Each knew the task the Master gave.
To grovel on the earth was mine,
To strive and strive forever thine.
I feel thee struggling to be free!
Patience! the stars are calling thee.
Nine decades have their mission wrought,
With sorrows — more with blessings — fraught.
Alas, I know not what thou art!
In mercy doomed so soon to part,

I gently crumbling in decay,
Thou springing on thy mystic way
We cannot guess to whom, to what ;
Thou " canst not go where God is not."

November, 1891.

THE END.

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